



ODIHAM X V HOOK RAVENS
JAM LEAGUE
22nd JANUARY 2026

I am well aware that I have reported on Bowls not being good for your health especially if you have a heart condition. Thankfully my heart is OK (ish) but today my aorta (that is far from ok) would have felt the pressure. Thankfully the good nature of the match made it an enjoyable experience and therefore OK health wise but wow, was it a close match or what!

Away at Odiham is never an easy match especially where the now infamous blue mat is concerned. This was the first time I had ever seen it and personally I thought it looked good and wondered what all the fuss was about! I would soon find out! Add to that the pressure of a last minute change to the squad due to a failed late fitness test and then a small but unexpected diversion in Odiham Village that caught most of the squad out and preparation time at the venue was reduced. Is it going to be one of those days I thought.

On the Blue mat at Lead for the Ravens was Dave Wilson the reserve brought into the team at the last minute, Marlyn Murphy at Second and Paul Crook at Skip. 6-0 up after the first 2 ends was the perfect start and the perfect shot played by Dave where his bowl landed on the jack from behind looked like it was setting the tone for the match. Odiham obviously hadn't read that script and they promptly took the next 3 ends to bring the score back to 6-5. It looked like the match was settling into a tight affair until the 8th end when fantastic play saw Hook take 6 and they never looked back. Of the remaining 10 ends, Odiham only managed to win 3 of them and generally only small gains whereas Hook took a hat load of points. After 13 ends Hook held a 22-8 lead and Odiham mounted a spirited attack on the 14th end with their Second playing 3 accurate shots to put them on the road to the greatest comeback ever. They hadn't reckoned on the Hook resilience and Paul Crook's never give up approach. Paul somehow turned a 3 shot deficit into a 2 shot gain and you could see Odiham recognise their fate. Dave and Marlyn kept up the pressure with shot after shot gaining chalk marks and the approach received the icing on the cake with the very final delivery of the match from Paul. Already 31-11 up and holding 1 he delivered the most exquisite delivery to add to the tally. 33-11 was the final score on the mat and Chris could dream of a big win, except the Green mat did not read the script either!

Peter Newman making his debut at Lead, Jackie Nurser at Second and Liz Wilson at skip could only dream of the freedom of flowing points like the Blue mat had. You can always tell when a match is tight when few ends tally up more than a point and this match only had 8 ends that did produce 2 points or more! Tied ends are not really common in short mat but this had not 1, not 2 but 3 tied ends! There was lots of measuring as well! Alarm bells rang in the captain's head when he overheard Jackie say that she had played on mat 2 at Hook the previous evening! For those of you who have never played at Odiham, the Blue mat is supersonic compared to any mat at Hook and the Green is not much slower so Jackie playing on the slowest mat at Hoom to then play on a really fast one might have been problematic. At this point it is worth mentioning that the speed of the mats at Odiham were not the only problem with them. The line on both mats on the side furthest from the window was unpredictable and unforgiving! This certainly affected the choices that some players had when the need for accuracy was paramount.

The first 4 ends went Hook's way but the next 3 went to Odiham and they held a 5-4 lead. The 8th end saw Hook take the lead that they would hold onto until the 15th end when the scores were 10-10. Peter was improving on his good start as every end passed, Jackie played a sublime shot to turn a 4 shot deficit into a 1 shot gain and Liz frustrated the hosts time and time again. Ends were shared until the end of the 17th end with the score at 13-12 to Hook. The Blue mat had already finished so the audience for this game of cat and mouse was large enough for the

tension to be felt in the air. The end started with tit for tat bowls from both leads and the crowd appreciated the bowling skills. The seconds joined in with the shots to add to the tension but despite greta work by Jackie it was Odiham who were holding 2 by the time the Skips had their chance to join in the fun. It was noted that Hook were to have the final delivery and that was seen as a huge advantage. Liz took her first bowl against the 2 shot deficit and the bowl went too wide and the deficit remained. Her second bowl was against the same deficit and she connected with her target perfectly and it left with a bowl from both sides touching the jack. The home skip missed his target and Liz came to inspect the head. Although it was felt the end was tied Liz was prepared to take a shot but by the time she reached the mat again she changed her mind and sent a shot nowhere near the jack! The measure in detail then took place with pieces of paper below the jack/bowl mix and lights shining above it and after what seemed like a fortnight it was confirmed to be a tied end. This meant a 13-12 victory on the mat and the 10-0 win for the Ravens. I hope this report has got across the tension in the air but it was also a greta sporting moment as the hosts remained upbeat and friendly. The result meant that the Ravens retained their second place in the table.

Next week sees a return to Hook for the Ravens as they welcome Alencon 25 for the top of the table clash. My thanks to the squad today, it was the first time all season I haven't had to tell anyone to smile!

Go Ravens